

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OTTAWA 06473 191550Z
ACTION INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4151
INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR

C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 06473

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, PINR, SG, CA
SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC DATA ON JACQUES ASSELIN, CANADIAN
AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO SENEGAL

1. BORN ON APRIL 12, 1929, ASSELIN GREW UP IN A FRENCH-SPEAKING ENVIRONMENT IN MONTREAL, ATTENDED THE UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA (B.A.) AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTREAL (M.A.), AND JOINED EXTERNAL AFFAIRS IN 1957. HE HAS SERVED ABROAD IN MEXICO CITY, WASHINGTON, MOSCOW, AND PARIS, AND FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS HE HAS BEEN DIRECTOR OF THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS DIVISION. FROM 1963-67, HE WAS ON LEAVE FROM EXTERNAL AFFAIRS TO SERVE AS EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL OF EXPO '67. HE AND HIS WIFE, LOUISE, HAVE TWO CHILDREN. SHE IS ALSO FRENCH-CANADIAN; THEY BOTH SPEAK ENGLISH, HE BETTER THAN SHE DOES.

2. COMMENT: AN EMBASSY OFFICER WHO KNEW ASSELIN WHEN HE WAS SERVING IN WASHINGTON IN THE EARLY 60'S RECALLS HIM AS BOTH A CANADIAN AND A QUEBEC NATIONALIST. FOR EXAMPLE, HE OCCASIONALLY WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO BE CRITICAL OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IN A MANNER WHICH SEEMED DESIGNED TO ASSERT HIS CANADIAN IDENTITY. AT SAME TIME, HE WAS OFTEN CRITICAL OF THE WAY FRANCOPHONES WERE TREATED BY ANGLO-PHONES IN CANADIAN SOCIETY GENERALLY AND IN EXTERNAL
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AFFAIRS PARTICULARLY. HE USED TO BE ESPECIALLY IRKED THAT HE HAD TO WRITE HIS REPORTS IN ENGLISH IF HE WANTED THEM TO BE READ IN OTTAWA.

3. TODAY ASSELIN NO LONGER HAS THIS PROBLEM, AS BOTH LANGUAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION IN EXTAFF. WE SUSPECT ASSELIN'S FRENCH-CANADIAN BACKGROUND IS NOW NOT

A LIABILITY BUT AN ASSET FOR HIM IN HIS CAREER. IN FACT,
HIS APPOINTMENT AS AMBASSADOR TO SENEGAL AT AGE 48 MAY BE
DUE IN LARGE PART TO THIS BACKGROUND. IN ANY CASE, HE HAS
STRUCK US AS AN OPEN, CONGENIAL, OUTGOING, AND BRIGHT
INDIVIDUAL. WE BELIEVE OUR COLLEAGUES IN DAKAR WILL FIND
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HIM AND HIS ATTRACTIVE WIFE WORTH CULTIVATING. ENDERS

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 19-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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